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G. A. Durham
8° 42

DURHAM.

BY

M. W. WHITFIELD, M.A.

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DURHAM.*

By M. W. Whitfield, M.A.

THE two northern counties of England are probably less known to dwellers in this district than they deserve to be. Indeed it must surprise many readers of *The Hull Quarterly* to be told that within three hours' ride of their own doors is to be found a city which for combination of natural scenery of rock, wood and water, with architectural grandeur and antiquarian interest may stand comparison with any spot upon even the classic Rhine. Yet those who have seen the city of St. Cuthbert,

> "Where his cathedral, huge and vast,
> Frowns down upon the Wear."

need not travel across the German Ocean in search of relics of the romantic past. The long line of Prince Bishops and Golden Canons would hold their own among any assemblage of Feudal times, and have even to the present day left their mark upon the ancient walls and mouldering buildings of the old city on the hills that seems stranded like some grim Viking's ship amid the bustle and progress of the populous county over which its prelates once reigned supreme.

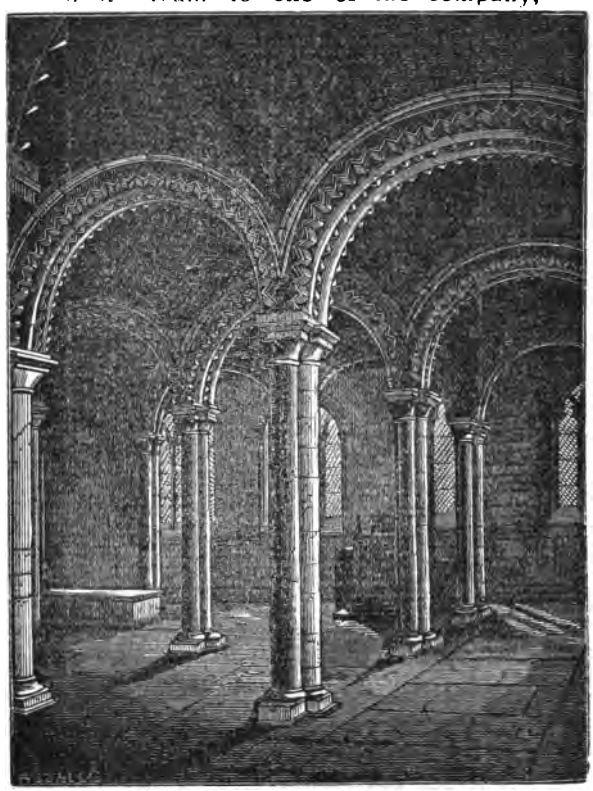
Respecting the name Durham, authorities seem to disagree; some say the original name was Dunholme, whilst

* For the loan of the blocks to illustrate this article, we are deeply indebted to Geo. Walker, Esq., of Durham.

others consider it to be Deor-ham, the home of the wild beasts; anyone who has seen the city on "pay-day," when the miners are leaving the public houses will be more inclined to agree with the latter interpretation. However that may be, the city owes its fame to the arrival of the relics of Saint Cuthbert, a Northumbrian saint who lived and died in the odour of sanctity about the latter half of the seventh century. The good saint, after a life of austerity and devotion, was buried in the church of Lindisfarne, and in due course stories arose of miracles wrought in his lifetime and performed at his tomb after his death. Amongst other remarkable facts, it was found that years after his burial his body remained uncorrupted and undecayed, and this tended in no small degree to increase the reverence paid at his shrine.

The years rolled on, and a new race appeared upon the nothern coasts, the fierce Danes or Northmen, worshippers of Woden and Thor and the wild gods of Scandinavia, whom our Saxon forefathers had renounced in favour of a milder and more humanizing religion. These rough sea-warriors, descending upon our shores, pillaged, burnt, and destroyed all that came in their way. But small respect had they for Saxon saint or sinner; and ill would it have fared with the monks of Lindisfarne had they encountered the savage Norsemen. But they resolved to anticipate attack; so, carrying with them the sacred body of their saint, they determined to seek a safer home in some spot farther from the coast. For a time they wandered about, and at length settled at Chester-le-street, a little town about six miles from the present city of Durham, whose name betokens its Roman origin and whose church celebrated its thousandth anniversary not long ago. But the Danes having once found out the advantage of living upon other people rather than of working for themselves,

did not discontinue their ravages, and went further afield. The monks of St. Cuthbert with their weighty charge must perforce recommence their travels, this time to Ripon. After a sojourn of a few months, they resolved to return to Chester. But on the way a strange event occurred. For when the monks and their burden arrived near the Wear, the body of the saint could be moved no further, but seemed fastened to the ground, which circumstance naturally astounded and perplexed the people. They therefore betook themselves to fasting and prayer. Three days afterwards the saint appeared in a dream to one of the company,



The Galilee Chapel

telling him that his resting place was not to be Chester-le-street, but Dunholme. Now the monks knew no place of that name, and so were in some distress; but after a time they overheard two women talking, one asking the other if she had seen her cow. The other replied that it was in Dunholme. Thus their doubts were soon set at rest, and the appointed place was discovered. To silence those who disbelieve, behold the north side of Durham cathedral, with the effigy of the Dun Cow, attesting the truth of the story! And also, though somewhat later evidence, the Dun Cow Inn, so often the quarters of the Public Functionary who comes to "work off" those who have three weeks' notice to quit the Durham gaol.

At first a little church was reared; but later times were not contented with the humble structure of their forerunners. So Carileph, the sixth Bishop determined to erect a building worthy of so great a saint; and the ponderous pillars and Norman arches began to rise from their rocky foundations. Succeeding generations carried on the work, and the result is the noble pile that still dominates the winding stream.

The body of St. Cuthbert remains interred within the cathedral. About sixty years ago the tomb was opened, and the remains of the saint were seen, whilst several relics were removed to the Dean and Chapter Library, where they are now preserved. The Roman Catholics have a tradition that the true position of St. Cuthbert's tomb is only known to three persons, sworn not to reveal the secret. But the last examination of the remains seems to have settled the question beyond reasonable doubt.

At the west end of the cathedral is a remarkable building known as the Galilee Chapel. This is conspicuous for the elegance of its architecture, and also as containing the tomb of the Venerable Bede. Truly Durham with its ecclesias-

tical and academic repose seems a more suitable resting place for the pious and learned monk than his own monastic residences of Jarrow and Wearmouth, now swarming with industrial and commercial populations.

On the door of the northern porch may still be seen a grotesque figure which

The Sanctuary Knocker.

served as a knocker for those who claimed the right of Sanctuary. Night and day a monk was stationed in a chamber above the gateway to admit at once all who claimed the privilege of St. Cuthbert's protection. This was afforded for a space of not more than thirty-seven days. After that time had elapsed, should the offender not have succeeded in making his peace with his pursuers, he was conveyed to the sea coast, placed in the first ship bound for a foreign land, and it was his own fault if he came again within reach of his country's laws. Owing to a certain adventure with a lady in which the Saint only escaped with his life by a miracle, women were not allowed to approach the sacred shrine. There is a story told of two women who attempted to penetrate the sanctuary disguised in men's attire, but being discovered were condemned to public penance before the whole city.

The ancient custom of ringing the curfew bell is still observed in Durham. Every night of the week, Saturdays excepted, the bell is tolled at nine o'clock.

It is said that one Saturday evening long ago the ringer went up the Tower according to custom, but disappeared mysteriously, and was never more seen. The Evil One, in fact, had carried him off. Since that time no Curfew bell has been rung on Saturday night.

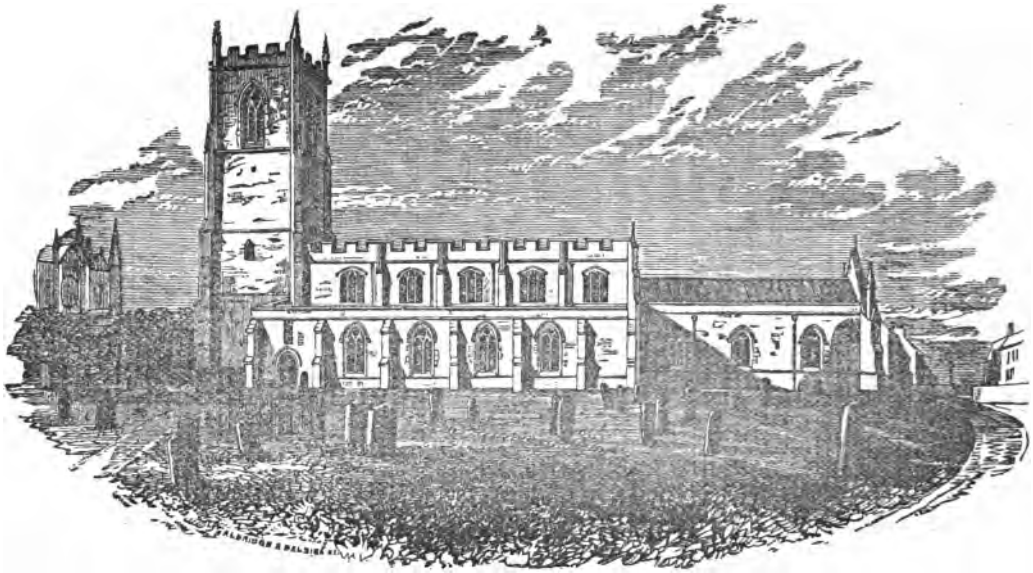
We cannot now speak of the glories of the chapel of the Nine Altars, nor of the exalted Bishop's Throne, nor of the mighty Norman pillars unequalled between this and Egypt; we must proceed outside to the cloisters and the Convent buildings now partly used as a Library and Museum. Past these we go through the Crypt and emerge in the College, which is not an educational establishment, but the residence of "the Dean, the Canons and other members of this cathedral church," as the Sunday bidding prayer has it. These poor men have been pitifully shorn of late years; instead of an income of five thousand a year they are obliged to be content with a modest thousand; the Dean, however, receiving three. The last of the "Golden Canons" died a few years ago, having, according to popular report, extracted a quarter of a million from the coffers of the Church. The residences here were built to match the incomes, and many of the rooms are truly baronial in their proportions.

A dark and steep passage leads from the College to the river side. Here beautiful walks are laid out along the winding banks, overshadowed by venerable trees and affording delightful views on every hand, now high above the stream and again at the level of the water; at one time over or under an antique bridge, at another past the plashing of the weir of a water-mill; and again beneath the cawing of a colony of rooks. Respecting these latter it is said that the wife of one of the cathedral dignitaries, being annoyed by their presence, obtained permission to have them shot or driven away. The disgusted birds withdrew from the spot.

But the very year that the old lady died, the birds again took up their quarters in the woods which they had quitted. Some hundreds are shot every year; but in spite of this they live and flourish, a numerous and noisy assembly.

Not far from the rookery we come to Count's Corner, rendered notable by the residence of a little Polish Count, who lived here to the great age of ninety-nine. He was so small that when his wife, a woman of ordinary size, was angry with him, she used to put him on the chimney-piece and would not take him down until he promised to behave himself to her satisfaction. In the museum on Palace Green may still be seen the suit of clothes he used to wear; and a life size model of the little Count himself.

Opposite Count's Corner we see rising from the rocky heights, the Church of St. Oswald, which possesses a special interest to Hull visitors as the scene of the labours of the late Dr. Dykes, whose family was well known in Hull during the last generation. St. Oswald, perhaps, is not so well known in this district. He was a Saxon king who ruled over Northumbria more than a thousand years ago. He was a champion of Christianity against the pagan ruler of the rival kingdom of Mercia, but was unsuccessful on the field of battle and was slain by his rival. On the east wall of the church, is a statue of St. Cuthbert, holding the head of St. Oswald in his hand. The church presents no special architectural features. Indeed, with the exception of course of Durham Cathedral, we who are accustomed to the glories of Beverley, of Bridlington, of Patrington, and of our own Holy Trinity, are not inclined to look with special admiration upon the church architecture of the North. The churchyard has now overflowed its ancient boundaries and stretches across the road to a bare, uninteresting patch of ground, which would call for no mention did it not contain the grave of the late Dr. Dykes, now



The Church of St. Oswald.

becoming a modern Mecca to a large class of churchmen.

Still keeping to the windings of the river we come upon an ancient bridge, with pointed arches, and built upon an incline. The curious in architecture will notice that the bridge was originally much narrower, and the widened part may be known by the plainness of the arching as distinguished from the ribs of the earlier structure.

We need not follow the woods and water further than to the race-course, where the miners often resort for purposes of demonstration. It is a stirring sight to see the companies from the numerous pits coming into the city, each headed by its band, and all marching to the sound of independent tunes, producing the same effect as the simultaneous playing of all the several pieces of half a score of concerts upon instruments remarkable more for strength than sweetness. Then come the orations of Bradlaugh, and of Burt, and other notabilities. At the conclusion of the proceedings some go home drunk, and others sober. Upon the whole, the miner of the North, though rough in outward appearance, is a good hearted fellow, and those who have most to do with him like him best, but it takes some little time to become accustomed to his peculiarities.

That portion of the river which flows by the race course, is the scene of an annual celebration of some interest to the Northern mind. Everyone knows how the rowers of the Tyne have for many years disputed the supremacy in aquatics with all comers. This devotion to boating is not confined to the Tyne, but has spread to the neighbouring river. Every year towards the end of June crowds of holiday makers of all classes throng the river banks to cheer on their champions. During the races, business is suspended, and the shops are closed. Crowds pour in from the neighbouring towns, and a high carnival is held. In addition to the

more serious races, one takes place which is not without novelty to the visitor. Sturdy coal trimmers are pitted, eight against eight, with no means of propulsion but their trimmer's shovels. These urge on their craft amid deafening shouts from their several backers, and laughter from the spectators. Nor is the racing confined to the plebeian or professional ranks. Grave old Clerics and University Dons may be seen careering along the banks, urging on their respective favourites; and great is the excitement of their partisans, according as "Varsity," or "School," or "City," happens to win the day.

The University of Durham is ancient in intention, though not so in fact. Oliver Cromwell is said to have formed the design of founding a seat of learning here, and actively busied himself about the preliminaries of the work. Before everything was completed the great Protector died. It was not the part of the king of the Restoration to further Cromwell's schemes, and so naturally the project fell through. In this condition things remained until the year 1832, when the Ecclesiastical authorities of the diocese made application to parliament to set apart certain incomes for the foundation and maintenance of a university. A senate was appointed, and what had been but a project became an accomplished fact. The undertaking grew apace, and in course of time added to itself Colleges of Medicine and Science at Newcastle, and even affiliated Colleges in Africa and the West Indies. In these days of express trains facilities of locomotion have rendered access to the older Universities easier, and so have somewhat diminished the necessity for a University of the North; but still Durham presents to many men advantages not obtainable at either Oxford or Cambridge. For example, the possibility of obtaining a degree after two years' residence renders Durham a very desirable place for those who wish to

commence their University course somewhat later in life, and to whom, therefore, the saving of a year is a matter of importance. The same shortening of residence is also an advantage to those whose means are limited, and who would wish to save the expense of a third year at College. Inducements, too, are held out to students of Theological Colleges to finish their course by taking a degree at Durham.

Another educational institution of Durham is the ancient and richly endowed Grammar School. Though its numbers have never swollen to the proportions of the great public schools of the Midlands and the South, it has produced a constant succession of able scholars. Its latest honour lists begin with a Senior Wrangler, and end with six scholarships gained at the Universities during the preceding term by boys in the school. On the river, too, its performances have been by no means despicable, and it has produced more University Oars than any other school of its size in the kingdom.

Even were there no cathedral in this city, Durham would still be one of the most picturesque of towns. For the grey old castle walls, climbing the wooded rocks, tier above tier, present a sight which in striking and picturesque boldness it would be difficult to match. The present building is of many ages, part being as old as the time of William the Conqueror. It is now used as a residential college for the University. From this point of view it presents some features scarcely to be rivalled at Oxford or Cambridge. The old baronial hall, for instance, is a dining room of which any college might well be proud. The grand remains of Norman work, and the ancient tapestries are well worthy to be compared with anything of the kind elsewhere; whilst the situation of the students' rooms in the old keep of the castle, with their views of hill and wood and stream, is certainly with-

Finchale Priory.

out rival.

Here in olden times was the residence of the great Prince Bishops, and hence they ruled their subjects, even with the power of life and death. Since the foundation of the University they have retired to the castle of Bishop Auckland, ten miles away, and only occupy a suite of rooms here during brief visits to the city. Though the See has been greatly diminished from its ancient grandeur, it still remains one of the richest of Bishoprics; and its traditions of learning, at all events, have been well preserved by the appointment of the scholar of European reputation who now occupies the Episcopal seat. Tradition asserts that there is a subterranean passage for some miles from the Castle to the old Priory of Finchale, charmingly situated at a rocky bend of the river Wear. This derives its origin from St. Godric the hermit, whose marvellous austerities gained him a great reputation for sanctity. During the depth of winter he would stand whole nights in the running water of the river, to mortify the flesh, once making the devil so angry that he stole the saint's clothes. The monastery was suppressed in the time of Henry the Eighth. Its ruins bear interesting traces of the changes they have undergone at the hands of succeeding generations.

Other old foundations are situated in the immediate neighbourhood, and castles and noblemen's seats innumerable at a few miles' distance. For example, the Hospital at Sherburn, founded seven hundred years ago for the reception of lepers. As time went on, the revenues of the hospital increased enormously, while the disease died out in England. But the income was then employed for the establishment of an alms house for aged men, and a dispensary for the poorer classes of the country. Thus the foundation serves to carry out the beneficent purpose of relieving pain and suffering, though in a

form necessarily differing from that originally designed.

Another of the institutions of the neighbourhood is the Roman Catholic College of Ushaw, which owes its foundation to a settlement from Douay in France, during the last century. Here on the top of a wild moor the visitor is astonished by coming upon a magnificent assemblage of buildings, with splendid chapels, libraries, museums, and all the appliances necessary for more than four hundred students, from the youngest boys, to those who are about to enter the Roman Catholic priesthood.

Within a few minutes' walk of the centre of the city is to be seen all that remains of Neville's Cross, which gave its name to the battle in which the King of Scotland was taken prisoner. For many years, this neglected fragment was left covered with earth and rubbish as though of no interest whatever. At length an anxious antiquary bestirred himself to do a little for its restoration and protection, and the dirt was cleared away. No sooner was this done, than some mischievous spirit began to play havoc among the stones; so it was deemed better to decently re-inter the remains, and enclose them from harm within a lofty iron palisade. Thus secured they will at all events escape destruction.

During the battle of Neville's Cross, some of the monks ascended the Tower to see the fray. Hence arose the custom of ascending the Tower and singing hymns on the anniversary of the fight. The custom still survives, but under changed conditions; the date has in course of time been altered to the 29th of May, while the monks have given place to the white robed choristers, who still sing their annual songs from the three sides of the Tower which command a view of the battle-field.

Durham is connected with many names well known in the history of our

country; as Pudsey, who was one of the rulers of England during the absence of Richard the First in the Holy Land. In another field, Butler, the author of the immortal *Analogy* was Bishop of Durham during the last century. The city was for some years represented in parliament by John Bright, and one of its present members is the late Solicitor General, Sir Farrar Herschell, Q.C. It has been the home of many learned authors, and at present numbers among its Cathedral and University officials several writers of fame and erudition. May the ancient city long continue to sustain the boast of its University's motto—

"*Fundamenta ejus super montibus sanctis.*"